

VZCZCXRO9204
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHKUK RUEHMOS
DE RUEHJI #0286/01 1011040
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 111040Z APR 06
FM AMCONSUL JEDDAH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9042
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1340
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1418
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 6392
RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA PRIORITY 0102
RUCNFB/FBI WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 JEDDAH 000286

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

RIYADH, PLEASE PASS TO DHAHRAN; DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP,
NEA/IR, PARIS FOR ZEYA; LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/10/2015

TAGS: [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [IR](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#)
SA, SOCI, YM

SUBJECT: THE CG IN SOUTHERN SAUDI ARABIA, PART II - THE
UNOFFICIAL GOVERNOR OF NEJLAN

REF: JEDDAH 285

Classified By: Consul General Tatiana Gfoeller, for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

This is Part II in a two-part series on meetings between the
Consul General and the Governor of the Nejran province.

11. (S) SUMMARY. At the conclusion of the formal meeting
between the Consul General and Nejran Governor Prince Mishael
bin Saud bin Abdulaziz, CG, Congenoff, and A/RSO were invited
for drinks with the Governor at his home. Throughout the 2
hour-long informal meeting Prince Mishael spoke candidly
about a host of issues, including his and the SAG,s fears of
an expansionist Iran, America's relationship with the Arab
world, Saudi tourism, and his desire to leave Nejran behind.
The meeting provided an important insight into the Governor's
feelings about his country, his government, and his work.
END SUMMARY.

WHEN A STRONG WIND BLOWS...

12. (C) The Governor began the informal meeting poolside in
his vast garden by readdressing a point he made earlier in
the day about the increasing access to information that
people in the Middle East have. "All Saudis do is watch
television," he proclaimed, "and they know more than ever
what is happening in the world...they see what happened at
Abu Ghraib." According to him, the United States gives
disillusioned Saudis a reason to raise their voice and to act
on their anti-American feelings. He went on to say that he
believes that the US,s goal in spreading democracy, however
honorable, will never be achieved because the people of the
world will merely wait for the US to give up. "When a strong
wind blows all people have to do to avoid it is duck and wait
for it to pass. I love America, but if you try to change a
society you will fail because there are some things you will
never be able to change. You will never be able to change
history. You will never be able to change geography."

UNDERSTANDING SAUDIS 101

13. (C) Interestingly, Prince Mishael then brought up the
subject of the recently failed US-UAE port agreement and was
quick to opine that America's relationship with Saudi Arabia

is the most important relationship it has in the Gulf.
"These other Gulf countries don't have what we have - wealth, a border with the Gulf, the Red Sea, Jordan, and Iraq...we are a very important partner of the US." He did add that Saudi Arabia needs the US as much as the US needs it and maintained that he is one of the key proponents of stronger and closer US-Saudi relations within the Saudi royal family.

14. (C) The Governor also spoke to the seeming differences between what Saudis say to Americans on the record and what they say off the record. Saudis have "four personalities" - one for dealing with other Saudis inside Saudi Arabia, one for dealing with non-Saudis inside Saudi Arabia, one for dealing with Saudis outside Saudi Arabia, and one for dealing with non-Saudis outside Saudi Arabia. Prince Mishael summed it up by saying, "There is a 180 degree difference in what a Saudi will say to an American and what he will say to another Saudi. Yes, Saudis want openness and want to progress but when it comes to changing their own lives, their own homes, they won't do it."

15. (C) Later in the meeting, the CG brought up the Saudi Inter-Ministerial Committee to solicit the Governor's thoughts on this new government body created to deal with outstanding child custody and exit permission issues. He responded by stating emphatically that it would never work. "You Americans must understand Saudis; you must understand Arabs. If you have a committee of Saudis, nothing will get done because everyone will want to be in charge; everyone will want to take the credit."

IRAN

JEDDAH 00000286 002 OF 003

16. (S) Prince Mishael spoke candidly about his and the SAG's growing concerns about Iran, mentioning the possible Iranian nuclear program, aggressive Iranian moves in southern Iraq, and Iran's attempts to meddle in Lebanon and Syria. He said Saudi Arabia is vulnerable to Iranian intrigues as well (presumably implying that the SAG's Shi'ia citizens, including his own Ismailis could be turned against it. Reftel.). He spoke nostalgically of Saddam Hussein, who though a "monster," kept Iran at bay. On this issue, he waxed eloquent and passionate, at times aggressively berating US foreign policy in Iraq for allegedly having brought about a strengthened Iran with expansionist designs throughout the Middle East. When the CG asked bluntly, "Your Royal Highness, are you saying that Iran is trying to create a 'Shi'ia Crescent' from Iran through Syria and Lebanon to the Mediterranean Sea?" he answered tersely, "Yes." The CG actively defended USG policy in Iraq and then asked the Governor what he personally would suggest as an effective USG policy vis-a-vis Iran. He answered immediately, "Iran is unfortunately too big and strong to attack militarily. You should destabilize them from within. Foment a revolution inside and get the Iranian people to install a government in Tehran friendly to yourselves and to us."

SAUDIS DON'T WANT TO VACATION IN THE KINGDOM

17. (C) Moving on to the subject of tourism, the Governor said that Prince Sultan bin Salman, head of the Saudi Supreme Commission for Tourism, was overly optimistic about his plans to open up the Kingdom to vacation-goers. He agreed that some people from other Gulf countries would want to come to Saudi Arabia to explore its rich geography and historical sites, but insisted that "upper class Saudis don't want to vacation where their wives have to be covered, where they can't have an (alcoholic) drink; where they can't do what they want." Prince Mishael conceded that there are different degrees of conservativeness in the Kingdom and that several local tourist destinations would appeal to some Saudis. "You can do things in Jeddah that you can't do in Qassim, for example." He quickly added, however, that it is "crazy" that women aren't allowed to drive in the Kingdom and cited this

law as one of the reasons why most Saudi families will not want to vacation in Saudi Arabia. "They will want to go (on holiday) someplace where they can do things that they cannot do here."

IT'S LONELY AT THE TOP

18. (C) The Governor has been in his position for over ten years. He claims that he was originally slated to serve for only one term of four years. Prince Mishael is now on his third term in office and says that Nejran was "nothing" until he came in and changed it for the better. He admitted, however, that he is now ready to resign as Governor. While he firmly believes in the one-term Governorship, it is not eminently clear if the length of his tenure as Governor of Nejran has, to date, been his choice. He alluded to the fact that the King will not permit him to leave his post at the present time. When Congenoff played to the Governor's ego by saying, "You've made some significant contributions and have made real progress for Nejran. It is obvious why they want you to stay on as Governor," Prince Mishael replied, "Yes, this is true."

19. (C) This informal meeting with the Governor revealed that he feels lonely in his fortress-like house at the top of a mountain in Nejran. His wife and children reside in Riyadh and he does not get to see them as often as he would like. He also confessed that he tries to leave the Nejran region as often as possible, opting to spend time in Riyadh or abroad when he can. "Eight days in Nejran feels like eight years," he grumbled. While he is a self-proclaimed "man of the middle-class" the Governor has no friends in the region with whom he spends time on a regular basis. Prince Mishael stressed that he works long hours and has many official engagements in the evenings, a routine with which he is bored. He would much rather go to events where people do not "bow down" to him. While he certainly entertains at his home

JEDDAH 00000286 003 OF 003

on occasion, Prince Mishael alluded to spending many cold winter evenings at his home alone by the fire with a glass of wine. "There is nothing to do in Nejran." It is not surprising, then, that the Governor seemed genuinely pleased to have the CG at his home, evidenced by his chatty demeanor.

BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

10. (C) Prince Mishael is a gregarious man who has a history of speaking candidly with American officials, particularly when his ego is stroked. He has a keen sense of humor and prefers to speak in metaphorical terms. He was one of Saudi Arabia's "Free Princes" and wishes to be viewed as a "regular guy." Prince Mishael drinks alcohol and has an affinity for dry red wine. He admitted to CG that some of his best and most trusted friends are British and American Jews. His hobbies include gardening. He is the son of King Saud and grandson of King Abdul Aziz, Saudi Arabia's founder.
Gfoeller